

You have a product that you want to sell, and you've decided that boys 11-14 will be your target market. How can you make sure they know about your product, that it appeals to them, and that they want to buy it? Companies use lots of ways to try to get your attention:

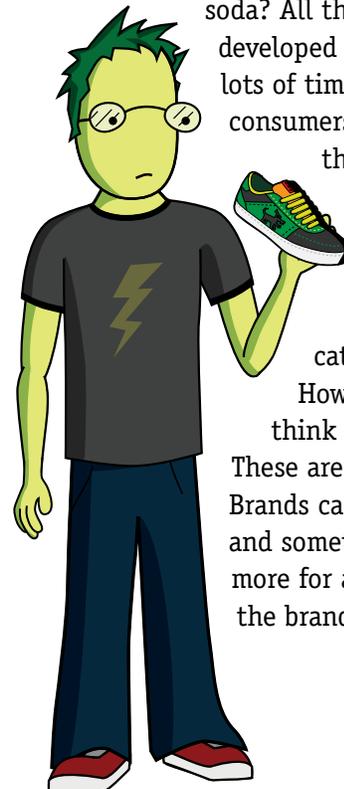
They Buy Ads: You can find advertisements everywhere: on TV, websites, the radio, in magazines, newspapers, on billboards, at bus stops or subway stations—and sometimes where you least expect them: in the middle of a movie, TV program, or a game. Here are some ways that companies get their product in front of you:

- **Prizes and promotions.** Sometimes advertisers use contests with special prizes to get people to buy—or buy more—of a product. Have you seen ads for a prize you could win by buying something? Maybe it's a toy in a fast food meal for kids, or a chance to win an mp3 player. The idea is to get your attention and then your purchase.
- **Product Licensing.** A famous name, character, or brand might help sell something else. For example, a football team could arrange for its name and symbol to be used on sheets or shirts through a product licensing agreement. The same with TV characters, popular singers, superheroes, movie stars—and many others.
- **Product Placement and Integration.** Have you ever watched a TV show or movie and noticed a character using a product you know? When you see that, the company that makes the product probably paid to have their product shown.

Sometimes it's more than just seeing a character with a certain kind of drink, or driving a certain kind of car; sometimes a brand or a product is integrated into the storyline.

- **Product Positioning.** Product positioning is what companies do to make it easier for you to find their product in a store. Companies try to place their products near the entrance, the check out, or an open, un-crowded area. Food companies often pay grocery store chains a lot of money to place their products at the ends of aisles, at eye level, and at the check-out. Think of the candy for sale at the check-out register in a grocery store.

They Create a Brand: A brand is the name, look and feel of a specific product or line of products. What's your favorite type of jeans? Shoes? Do you have a cell phone? Who makes it? What video gaming console do you use? Do you eat fast food? Drink soda? All these companies have developed a brand. They spend lots of time and money to get consumers to feel good about their brands.



But there's more to a brand than just a name. Images. Colors. Slogans or catchy phrases. Emotions. How do you feel when you think of a certain brand? These are parts of a brand image. Brands can be very powerful, and sometimes consumers pay more for a product because of the brand. Some people think

that a brand name may be higher quality, more stylish, more reliable, cooler, or more fun than a “no-name” product. (But, sometimes, that “no name” product is actually produced by the same company as the brand product!)

Package design: Companies spend a lot of time and money on package design to make their product stand out and appeal to the audience. Think about products you buy with a picture of a popular band or TV character on the label or box, or how your eye is drawn to brightly-colored packages, or cool designs. Companies that sell food have created packaging that lets kids eat on the go, with containers that are squeezable, shatter-proof, or easy to hold—and these appeal to parents, who actually do the buying.

Public relations: These are activities that companies use to promote their brands and products. The idea is to give the public a good image of the company. Public relations activities can include contests, special events to celebrate the opening of a new movie, interviews with TV news shows about a product or company, special guest appearances on shows that are popular with the target audience, or sponsorships with organizations that are popular with the target audience.

Cause-Related Marketing: Sometimes a company donates money to a cause that is related to its business or to its target audience. For example, some food companies

are donating money to programs to help kids be healthier. After natural disasters, some companies help in recovery efforts. It’s easy to spot this kind of marketing: companies that make these kinds of contributions to the community often place ads to tell about their charity work. This can be a win-win: a company’s activities might build brand loyalty while benefiting a community in need.

All these methods of drawing attention to a product can be adapted to different target audiences.

Things to Talk About and Do

- Choose a product and a target audience. What are some of the things you’d do to get your product noticed by your audience? Where might you buy ad space? What kind of movie or TV show would you use for product placement? How would you brand and package your product? How would you use public relations and cause-related marketing to make your company stand out?
- Develop a brand for yourself: what images, colors, looks, symbols and slogans would you use to promote yourself? What feelings do you want your brand to create? What do you want people to think when they see your name or symbol? How would you want them to feel?

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